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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who judges justly our Nation and world, we honor Your Name. You are so patient with us. Cleanse our eyes, that we may see more clearly. Open our hearts, that we may love You more dearly. Lord, we confess that sometimes injustice seems to prevail. Avenge injustice, O God, and cause the godly to rejoice. Deliver us from those who seek to set an ambush for freedom.

Lord, give our lawmakers the wisdom to look to You for safety, for You are our strength and salvation.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 30 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING MERLE DAVID HAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to share some real Iowa history this morning.

Merle David Hay from Glidden, IA, was the first Iowa serviceman to die in World War I. Hay enlisted on May 9, 1917, with his father's blessing, as he was too young to be drafted. He was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, Company F.

In the early hours of November 3, 1917, while posted in the trenches near the French village of Artois, the Imperial German Army attacked, and Merle Hay was killed. Hay's father said: "I am proud of my boy if he has given up his life for his country."

Merle Hay Road in Des Moines, IA, is a constant memory of this person's sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING DAVID JONES, SR.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment this morning to mourn the passing of a devoted son of Louisville, KY, and someone I was lucky to call a very dear friend.

I can say without exaggeration that David Jones, Sr., was the single most influential friend and mentor I have had in my entire career. I have never forgotten something he told me when I was starting out in Jefferson County. He said: "The most important word in the English language is 'focus.'"

David used his extraordinary focus and many other talents to build an extraordinary American business and to better his community. Whenever a local need had somebody—almost everybody, actually—stumped, David always seemed to end up in the thick of it, forging a path to success.

In the days ahead, many will rightly pay tribute to David's brilliance and his determination, but he was also one of the kindest, most decent, most generous individuals I have ever met. I will sorely miss his friendship, and Kentuckians will miss his extraordinary leadership.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, today the Senate will have an opportunity to take the first procedural step toward keeping the Federal Government funded and open.

At the end of July, the White House and the Speaker of the House reached an agreement to guide the appropriations process. Both parties, both Chambers, and both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue agreed to the terms. We laid out top-line funding targets for defense and nondefense; we swore off poison pill policy riders; and, unlike the past several budget deals, which took a full year to negotiate while appropriations languished, we finished this year's deal much earlier to ensure we had enough time to move the appropriations bills.

In other words, congressional leaders and the President laid the ground for a sensible, bipartisan funding process, but instead, over the past week and a half, we have seen our Democratic colleagues suggest that they may try to shoehorn their longstanding disagreements with President Trump into this appropriations process. Even though we all agreed not to insist on poison pills or change existing Presidential authorities, Democrats are threatening to filibuster Chairman SHELBY's clean Defense bill over their disagreements with the President on immigration policy.

I sure hope that doesn't happen. I hope our Democratic friends will allow the process to move forward when we vote later today. The stakes are high. We are talking about critical resources for the missions of the Department of Defense. Our military commanders have told us that this funding is vital to keeping peace with Putin's Russia, China, and all their efforts to harm America's interests. Just days ago, Saudi Arabian energy facilities literally went up in flames after what appears to be a massive, coordinated attack by Iran.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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In a world this dangerous, uncertain funding and continuing resolutions will not cut it for our national defense. Our men and women in uniform do not deserve to have the funding for their tools, their training, and their own pay raise, by the way—pay raise—used as leverage by Senate Democrats to try to extract concessions from the White House.

So, look, I would urge each of our colleagues to join me today in taking the first step toward fulfilling our obligation to keep this country safe and secure.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, we are closely monitoring events in the Middle East following that provocative and dangerous Iranian attack on Saudi energy facilities, which included the largest oil processing facility in the entire world.

As I said on Monday, Iran's reckless behavior is not just a threat to the region but to the entire global economy, and it must be met with swift consequences from the international community.

As the United States and our allies continue to learn more and weigh our options, there has already been one positive lesson that should not go unnoticed. While the attack has shaken global energy markets, to be sure, the United States is in a much better position to weather the storm than we might have been in past decades.

For years and years, an international attack of this magnitude would have been virtually guaranteed to roil the U.S. economy and send gas prices soaring for Americans at the pumps, but so far, this time around, analysts don't expect this event to yield the significant impacts we would have seen back in the seventies or even in the nineties. Why is that? The answer is three words: American domestic energy.

Over the last decade and often over the strenuous, strenuous objections of Democrats, our Nation has made incredible strides toward energy independence. We have explored new technologies, new methods, and new ways to fuel America's prosperity right here at home, and it is paying off big time. By 2015, our production had become so robust that I led the charge to lift the outdated ban on crude oil exports. Late last year, thanks in part to Republican policies, the United States became a net exporter of oil for the first time in decades.

Get this: Across all forms of energy, the Department of Energy projects that next year our Nation will export more energy than we import for the first time since 1953. Let me say that again. Thanks largely to Republican policies, our Nation is poised to become a net energy exporter for the first time since the Eisenhower administration.

That is huge progress, not just for our economy but, as we have just been reminded, for our national security as

well. You would think the country would be united in celebration, but not everyone is happy. Oh, no. Last week, just days before this massive disruption in the Middle East, House Democrats sent us several bills designed to limit domestic energy development and literally tie America's hands. One of those bills would have shut off exploration in a small portion of ANWR in remote Alaska. They want to reverse something that had been sought for 40 years until Republicans secured it in 2017.

So, as far as I can tell from the bills the House keeps sending us, the socialists who are calling the shots over there have never seen a pipeline they didn't want to cancel. They have never seen a pipeline they didn't want to cancel, a responsible development they didn't want to kill, or a step toward American energy independence they didn't want to reverse.

Along with the Democratic House, this also seems to describe their party's Presidential candidates. Almost all of them have endorsed the radical idea of ending oil and gas exploration on Federal lands not only offshore but onshore, too. Let me say that again. Almost all of them have endorsed the radical idea of ending oil and gas exploration on Federal lands, not only offshore but onshore, too. That is today's Democratic Party. This ideology has consequences for American prosperity, but it also weakens our Nation's footing in the world.

Just days after these Democratic votes, we were offered a sobering reminder of just how important American energy really is.

So here is the good news: This Republican Senate is on the job, and we won't let Democrats take us backward. We won't let them reduce our prosperity or make us more vulnerable to overseas chaos. Republicans will keep working to help our Nation thrive.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert A. Destro, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, defense funding is always an imperative. There are always going to be bad actors who threaten our country, whether they are major powers like China or Russia or terrorist organizations like ISIS or al-Qaida. We have to be prepared to counter those threats.

In the United States, we are used to having the most outstanding military in the world. In fact, we have come to rely on it. We assume our military will always be the best because it has been the best for as long as we can remember, but we can't forget that our military preeminence is the result of sustained investment. While our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines constitute the most advanced and proficient fighting force in the world, they can't do their jobs or maintain our military superiority without adequate resources. That includes funding, not just the weapons, equipment, and technology of today, but also the weapons, equipment, and technology of the future. It is too late to modernize our military when the threat has reached us. We need to invest in the equipment and technology of the future now so that when the threats of tomorrow materialize, we will be ready. This means delivering platforms like the future B-21 bomber on schedule and making robust investments in the cyber and space domains.

Right now, our military is rebuilding after years of underfunding and the strains in the war on terror. Here in the Senate, Members of both parties have worked together over the past couple of years to meet our military's funding and rebuilding needs. I hope that trend will continue.

In November 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report that warned that our readiness had eroded to the point at which we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China, and the Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts. That is a dangerous situation for our country to be in, and we need to keep working to rebuild our military so that we are not trailing behind other nations.

Other countries are certainly not holding back when it comes to military preparedness. Russia and China are busy investing in their militaries as we speak, and they have recently conducted joint military exercises. As the leader noted on the floor on Monday, military spending in China over the